

November 17th, 2025

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The Grapevine

Winterizing Strawberries

Strawberries are one of the easiest fruits that you can grow, but they require some special care to survive our Kansas winters. Strawberries can survive relatively cold temperatures, but they perform best when protected during the winter. Mulch protects plants from both freezing temperatures and the freeze-thaw cycles they can experience in the spring. The time period between Thanksgiving and Christmas is the ideal time to mulch our strawberries to protect them.

It is crucial to wait till the strawberries are completely dormant before we mulch them in for the winter. Last week we had some really warm days, and we still have some warmer weather on tap for the next week or two, so we can wait a bit longer before covering our plants. I'm hoping that last week's 20-degree temperatures didn't damage the strawberries due to the rapid temperature swing, as temperatures that cold can harm them if they haven't fully hardened off. In contrast, strawberries that have been hardened off can easily tolerate much colder temperatures. Straw makes excellent mulch for strawberries. Spread a three-inch layer of mulch over the top of your strawberries. Just make sure the mulch is not in large or thick clumps, as this can smother the strawberries. In the spring, we will need to remove the mulch as new growth starts to emerge and soil temperatures warm up. If you aren't sure when to remove the mulch, wait till we have stopped the freeze/thaw cycle so the plants are less likely to be heaved out of the ground.

Strawberries are one of my favorite fruits. We just planted a new strawberry bed this summer, and I'm looking forward to having some berries in the spring. With just a little care, you can easily have strawberries for years to come. Just a reminder, strawberries can tolerate freezing temperatures once they have adjusted to the fall. Happy Growing!



Amaryllis

Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum*) is a classic holiday bloom. Native to Africa, the genus *Amaryllis* originates from the Greek word amarysso, meaning "to sparkle." Bulbs were brought to Europe in the 1700s and have been known to bloom for up to 75 years. However, the amaryllis bulbs we commonly purchase and grow as houseplants are hybrids of the *Hippeastrum* genus and are native to Central and South America. When buying bulbs, select the largest ones available that are firm and dry. If growth is visible, it should be bright green. Each bulb should produce three to four blooms on a one—to two-foot stem. Larger bulbs will produce more flowers.

Amaryllises grow best in tight spaces. Select a container that is approximately one inch larger in diameter and twice as tall as the bulb, with drainage holes in the bottom. Hold the bulb over the container with the roots dangling to the bottom and add a sterile potting mix. Gently firm the soil around the roots to prevent damage. Leave the top third to half of the bulb visible above the soil.

Place the container in a sink and fill it with water thoroughly. When the water has stopped draining, set the plant in a warm, sunny location. As the flower opens, move the plant away from direct sunlight and to a cooler area to prolong the bloom period, which can last up to one month.

When blooming is complete, the amaryllis plant continues to grow and develop. Remove the bloom stalk to prevent the bulb from expending energy on seed formation. Move the container back to the sunny window. When the danger of frost has passed, you can gradually expose the plant to the outdoors by first moving it to an area with dappled shade. Over time, move it to a location with six hours of full sun each day. Apply a balanced houseplant fertilizer monthly.

Before the first frost, bring the amaryllis back inside and place it in a dark location. Stop watering it, and when the leaves dry, cut them off just above the base of the bulb. Allow the bulb to rest for 8 to 12 weeks without water. When new growth appears or when you are ready to force the bloom, relocate the bulb to a sunny window and begin watering and fertilizing regularly. From dormancy to bloom, it usually takes four to six weeks. Though amaryllises only require repotting every three to four years, the time to do this is after dormancy.

Video of the Week- Landscaping with Wildlife



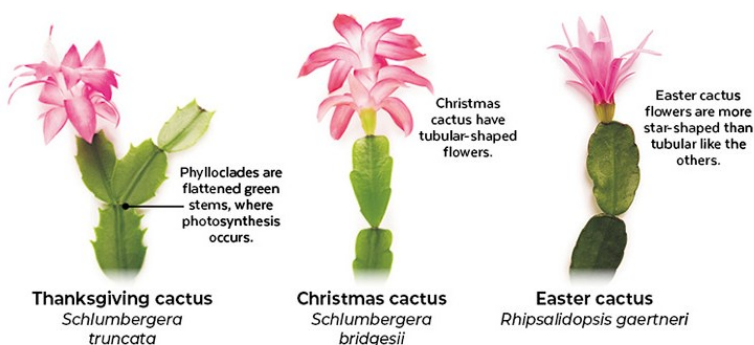
How you landscape your property and the plants you select can create a welcome invitation for wildlife to visit your property. Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent, will discuss basic landscaping concepts that will encourage wildlife to visit your yard. Learn about recommended native plant material to utilize, as well as key management techniques that will provide benefits to many different wildlife species. Watch here:

https://youtu.be/YovL_yW5Rmo?si=SOTChwS6u8cD9TdH

Winterizing Roses by Cynthia Domenghini

Although most shrub roses are hardy through Kansas winters, many hybrid teas and other modern varieties require protection. It is essential to wait until several hard frosts have occurred, but before the ground freezes, to winterize roses. Too early, and the stem remains warm and moist; good conditions for cankers to develop. Too late risks damage to the sensitive graft union where the rootstalk attaches to the above-ground growth.

Clean up plant debris in the area surrounding the roses to prevent diseases from overwintering. Mound soil or compost eight to ten inches high around each rose plant. Bring in new soil for this area rather than displacing soil from around the roses, which can damage the roots and expose them to the cold. Once the ground has frozen, add a 4-inch layer of straw, leaves, wood chips, or other mulch over the mound and cover it with a layer of soil to hold it in place. This will help protect the plants from the cold but also prevent early budding during warm winter and early spring days. As the mulch settles during winter, you may need to add more. Prune canes to 36 inches and remove weak or thin canes. Tie the remaining canes together loosely to keep them secure during windy weather. If the canes are allowed to whip in the wind, it can cause damage to the crown and disturb the soil. When the ground thaws in the spring, remove the mulch and soil from the base of the plant to return the soil level to normal. For more information on winterizing roses, check out this Kansas Healthy Yards Video: <https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/protecting-roses-for-the-winter>



Holiday Cacti ID

Thanksgiving cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*), Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*), and Easter cactus (*Schlumbergera gaertneri*) are popular houseplants, often given as gifts during the holiday season. They are grown for their beautiful, exotic flowers. These three cacti are found in the high-altitude, tropical rainforests of South America, where they grow

on trees and rocks. These three plants are often mistaken for one another, in part because they are frequently mislabeled in greenhouses. Let's start from the left. The Thanksgiving cactus is the most commonly sold holiday cactus in the United States. They are sold under the name "Christmas cactus"; however, they are two different species. Thanksgiving cacti have hooks or points on the stem (I think of them as the spurs on a turkey) that distinguish them from the other two types of holiday cacti. This holiday cactus is the most common because the flowers come in a wide range of colors, it is easier to get them to bloom, and finally, their growth habit makes it easier to ship them. In the middle is the true old-fashioned Christmas cactus. This cactus variety has scalloped edges rather than points and typically blooms from early December to January. Christmas cacti have fewer bloom colors and tend to have a drooping growth habit rather than the upright habit of a Thanksgiving cactus. The Easter cactus is the last one and, until recently, was the least common of the three. This cactus has stem edges that are scalloped, much like the Christmas cactus, but the blooms are star-shaped rather than tubular.

Regardless of which holiday cacti you have, the care requirements are very similar. All of these cacti prefer bright, indirect light. These plants are native to a damp, tropical environment and require more water than traditional cacti. Lightly fertilize the plants every other week after they quit blooming in the spring till mid-fall. Unlike many cacti, holiday cacti are heavier feeders and need more nutrients..

Upcoming Events

Garden Hour Webinars:

December 3rd- Gifts for Gardeners

Butler County Events:

November 17th at 12:15 pm- Companion Planting of Vegetables

November 19th at 5:30 pm- Houseplants Basics and Beyond at Benton Community Building



Maple Roasted Vegetable Hash

Ingredients

- 2 large sweet potatoes, diced
- 1 small onion, sliced
- 2 cups Brussels sprouts, thinly sliced
- 6 turkey sausage links, fully-cooked, sliced
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Microwave sweet potatoes in a bowl for 2 minutes, stir, and then microwave for an additional 2 minutes.
3. Add onions, Brussels sprouts, sausage, and syrup to the bowl and stir to combine.
4. Pour mixture onto foil-lined baking sheet.
5. Bake for 20 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Source: [North Dakota State University](https://www.ndsu.edu/pubweb/~gardeners/recipes/Maple_Roasted_Vegetable_Hash.htm)



LUNCH & LEARN

Bring your lunch and join Horticulture Agent, Calla Edwards, over the lunch hour during our monthly Lunch & Learn Program. This will be held over the lunch hour and will cover a variety of horticulture topics.

November 17th
12:15-12:45 p.m.

Lori's EMPORlyum!
1604 Custer Lane
Augusta, KS

November Topic:
Companion Planting

Many gardeners have heard that marigolds repel pests in vegetable gardens, or that beans dislike fennel. These sentiments are often attributed to a practice called "companion planting." But does companion planting really work? Join horticulture agent Calla Edwards for a discussion on the research behind companion planting as we dispel common myths and talk about what benefits companion planting can offer your garden.

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